February 3, 1966
6:10 pm

Senator Robert Kennedy called:

Kennedy: I talked over there about what we are going to do with the casket that President Kennedy came back in. I have talked to Secretary McNamara about getting rid of that so he has made some arrangements. He is not able to get release of the casket. Wanted to see if we can get that released.

Knott: My concern, and I have not talked to the Secretary, but with his man Steadman, is the man who is at Dartmouth now (Manchester) and spent some time in National Archives and like so many of us, while writing the story, was quite outraged about this aspect and he had planned in the biography that he is writing, which I understand will be released in 1968, to include a chapter dealing with this particular subject. If this is so, I think it is going to raise loads of questions about the release of the casket.

Kennedy: In what way?

Knott: As to how it was disposed of. More than that, the Attorney General had a letter from Congress Cabell urging that it be disposed of and related it to an Act of Congress passed last year that dealt with the rifle, tagging it as Government property.

Kennedy: I don't think it was pertinent at all to this case.

Knott: The Attorney General has asked that we do nothing without clearing with him. I am held up by the Attorney General and until I could talk with you and you could explore the possibility in 1968.

Kennedy: Hope that won't be published in 1968 - I don't know why we need this around at this time.

Knott: I think it ought to be disposed of. I think I was one of the first to discuss the possibility of disposing of it. On the other hand, if, in 1968, someone is going to be publishing things that will raise the question

Kennedy: What question?

Knott: The question of authority to release and dispose of it.

Kennedy: I think it belongs to the family and we can get rid of it in any way we want to.

Knott: I don't want to appear negative - just want to be sure we are clear and that we do this when the timing is right.

Kennedy: I have talked to Secretary McNamara. What I would like to have done is take it to sea. Could you call him and make the arrangements with Secretary McNamara?

Knott: I am held up at this point in time for clearance from the Attorney General.

Kennedy: Why don't we go ahead - I will have Katzenbach call you. I don't know what this has to do with this matter even if he has a chapter on it (Manchester).

Knott: It is a disposal of Government property in one sense, although I took the position we were paying for services.

Kennedy: I don't think anybody will be upset about the fact that we disposed of it - I will take the responsibility for that and I will call Mr. Katzenbach and have him call you.

Knott: If there is no problem in your mind -

Kennedy: Will you call Secretary McNamara after you hear from Katzenbach?

Knott: Yes I will and we will make the arrangements from there.